

THE GREAT “I AM’S” of JESUS

by

John Caylor

Copyright © 1957

CHAPTER TEN

I AM THE TRUE VINE

Jesus was in the midst of His farewell address to the disciples. **“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me,”** He began the address. Then He pointed to heaven where He was going to prepare a place for His followers. The very intimate discourse was so personal that it was reserved for the disciples after Judas had gone out.

Best known of New Testament passages, John 14 was spoken by the Lord at the table at the institution of the Lord’s Supper. Whether the analogy of the vine was a continuation of His table talk or was suggested by a vine by the path to Olivet is not known. It may be that Jesus was thinking about the fruit of the vine which was an emblem in the Lord’s Supper; or one of the disciples might have stumbled over a vine as the group moved up the slope to Olivet. It really does not matter. Jesus was speaking to a group thoroughly familiar with the vine and its culture.

THE VINE AND THE HUSBANDMAN

Jesus said, **“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman”** (John 15:1). The discourses of Jesus were couched in familiar illustrations. Just as He identified Himself with the almost-universal occupation of shepherding, He was on familiar ground here in speaking of the vine and its fruit.

In all the words of Jesus, He identified Himself with the Father. If He identified Himself with the vine, He must identify the Father as husbandman.

Christian growth is dependent upon cultivation. A vine left to itself will grow much wood but little fruit. It may even deteriorate into the bearing of inferior grapes. The cooperative effort of Father and Son is necessary for proper growth and fruitage. It is so with the growth of the individual Christian: it is so also with the extension of the kingdom. Cultivation is a divine aspect and is entirely in the hands of the Father. It is the husbandman who decides how the branches will be pruned. He will shape the vine and tend it. There will be no separation. It is a permanent union. This is a divine prerogative.

As it is the Father who determines true branches, it is He alone whose responsibility it is to prune the true branches and make them more fruitful. It is He alone who can determine the branches which appear on the vine but are not properly a part of the vine.

Fruit-bearing is the identifying characteristic. One branch goes to wood, another bears fruit. The one which is not properly identified with the vine and grows only wood, the Father cuts away. The branch which receives its life from the vine and bears fruit, He purges that it may bear more fruit.

THE CHRISTIAN IS THE BRANCH

“I am the vine, ye are the branches” (John 15:5), Jesus said. There are two kinds of branches: the one which abides in Christ, and the one which does not. One of the branches **“bringeth forth much fruit;”** and the other, **“. . . is cast forth as a branch, and is withered”** (John 15:5, 6).

What does the Christian have to do with his connection with the vine and his fruit-bearing? It is declared that the Father is the husbandman and determines which branches are true and which are false. Jesus declared, **“He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit . . .”** (John 15:5). This would indicate that while God the Father chooses the branches, there is responsibility on the part of the Christian who is chosen.

Jesus told His disciples that their responsibility for fruit-bearing was represented by their abiding in Him. Said He, **“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you”** (John 15:7). The Christian receives his strength from Christ. He is purged by the Father. Fruit-bearing is his responsibility. He must abide in Christ and Christ must abide in him. *To put it another way, the Christian must live more and more in and through Christ and less and less in and of himself.* The Christian’s fruit is dependent upon his dedication to the will of the Father and the life of Christ.

God wills that His children bear much fruit. In Christ there is enough life-giving strength for each Christian to bear fruit for the Master. Jesus is honored, the Christian is promoted, and the Father is glorified by fruit-bearing. The Lord declared: **“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples”** (John 15:8).

The way to glorify the Father in bearing much fruit is to abide in the love of Christ, even as He was in the love of the Father. Jesus put it, **“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love”** (John 15:10).

FRUIT IS THE PROOF OF DISCIPLESHIP

In the Yearbook of American Churches for 1955, it was reported that church membership in the United States had climbed to 97,482,611 at the end of 1954. This means that 60.3 per cent of all Americans are members of churches. It has become popular in the United States to affiliate with churches. Does this mean real Christianity?

In Jesus’ farewell address to His disciples, He set forth the distinguishing principles which identify Christians. A nominal “follower of Jesus,” may be like the branch which yields no fruit. However, the Christian who bears fruit is living the real Christian life. Church membership does count. But no-account people may be church members.

On the other hand, it is not the responsibility of Christians to judge their neighbors. **“By their fruits ye shall know them,”** is the identifying characteristic. What are the fruits?

The fruits of the flesh are of one sort. It was left to Paul, the missionary theologian, to list the fruits of the flesh. One who is characterized by these fruits is certainly not abiding in the vine. How much of America is characterized by this fruit? What part of our civilization could be identified with these **“works of the flesh”**?

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

Perhaps many Americans are familiar with more of the above terms than with the identifying principles of Christian fruit-bearing. Paul identified the Christian with his fruit as follows:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (Galatians 5:22, 23).

Let the Christian examine himself. He need not look upon the indifferent church members or the fruitless “followers.” Self-examination will help improve the fruit of the Spirit.

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

~ end of chapter 10 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
